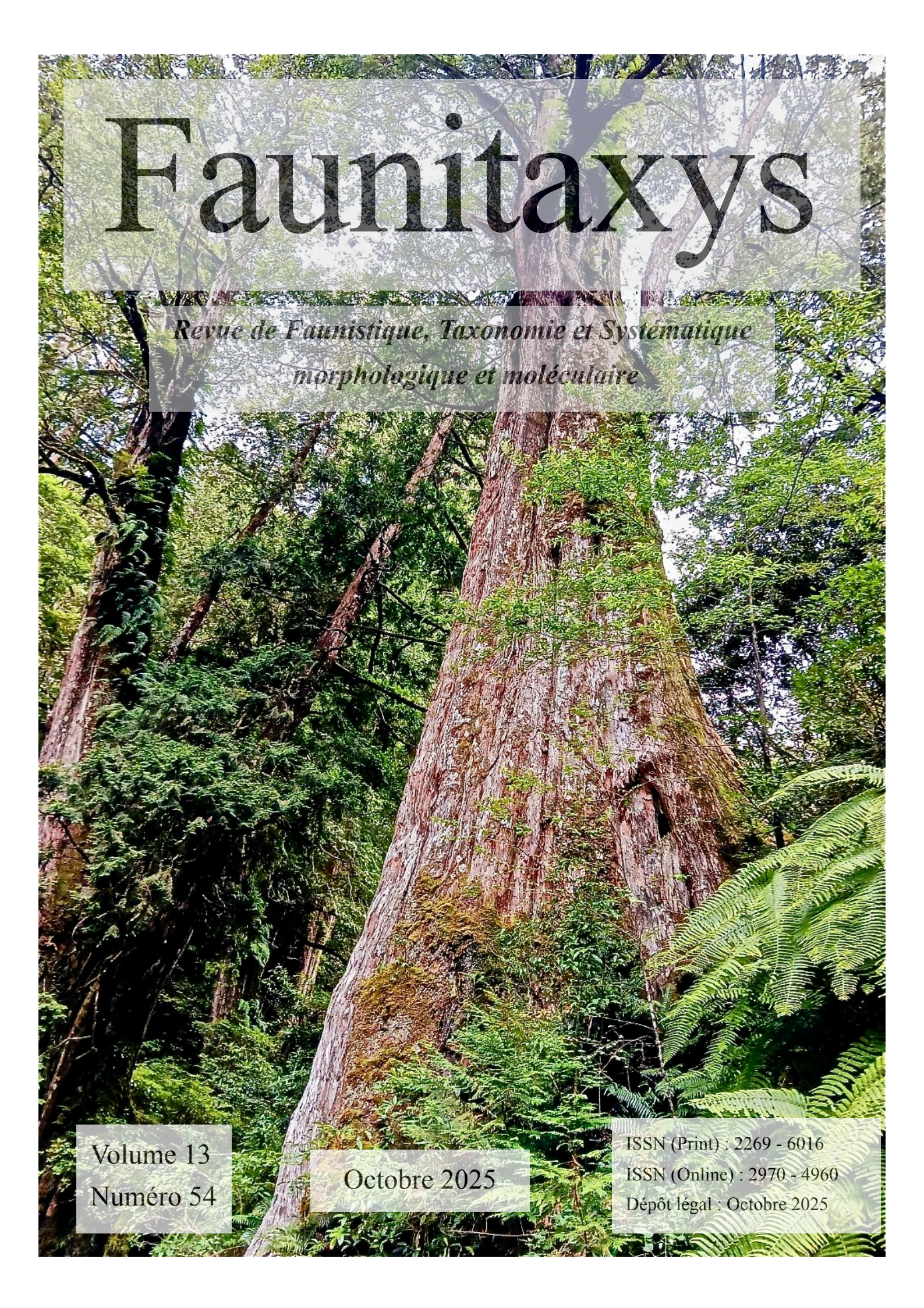




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Contribution to the taxonomic knowledge of the genus *Aesalus* Fabricius, 1801 (Coleoptera: Lucanidae), with description of a new species from Northern Taiwan

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Keywords:

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Taiwan.

Abstract. – *Aesalus* (*Huaesalus*) *leei* sp. nov., a new species of the *A. imanishii*-species group (Coleoptera: Lucanidae), is described from Northern Taiwan. The species is characterized by nine-segmented antennae, distinctive external morphology, and unique genital characters. An updated identification key and checklist for Southeast Asian *Aesalus* species are also provided.

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Introduction

Aesalus Fabricius, 1801 (Coleoptera: Lucanidae: Aesalinae), comprises small, hemispherical stag beetles that remain poorly studied throughout the Palearctic region (Huang et al., 2009; Paulsen 2013, 2018). The genus is currently divided into two subgenera: the nominotypical *Aesalus* (s. str.) and *Huaesalus* Huang & Chen, 2017. These subgenera collectively include six species and three subspecies (Zorn et al., 2016; Catalogue of Life 2023). The subgenus *Huaesalus* is distinguished from *Aesalus* (s. str.) by several key characteristics: (1) nine-segmented antennae with an entirely tomentose club; (2) the presence of two dorsal medial teeth on the left mandible in both sexes; and (3) a male aedeagus median lobe that is widest at the middle and markedly narrowed both basally and apically. *Huaesalus* currently contains three Southeast Asian species: *A. imanishii* Inahara & Ratti, 1981, *A. sichuanensis* Araya, Tanaka & Tanikado, 1995, and *A. qiaoweipengi* Huang, Yang & Chen, 2022 (Huang et al., 2022). The new species described here belongs to the *imanishii* group, although the infragenus classification within *Huaesalus* requires further clarification.

Previously, only *A. imanishii* had been recorded from Taiwan, restricted exclusively to high-elevation forests in the Central Mountain Range (Inahara & Ratti, 1981; Fujita, 2010). During this study, examination of *Aesalus* specimens from Northern Taiwan revealed an undescribed species inhabiting significantly lower elevations. This paper provides a formal description of this new species, *Aesalus leei* sp. nov., along with a revised identification key for East Asian *Aesalus* species and preliminary biological observations.

Material and methods

All specimens were collected in compliance with applicable wildlife protection laws and regulations. Specimens were obtained at various stages (both adults and larvae) from naturally decaying

logs in their native habitats and subsequently reared under controlled laboratory conditions. For specimen preparation, adult individuals were humanely euthanized through freezing. Following euthanasia, specimens were carefully dry-mounted on archival-quality mounting boards to ensure long-term preservation. Morphological examinations were conducted using a stereomicroscope under appropriate magnification. For genitalia examination, the terminal two abdominal segments were carefully dissected. Abdomens of specimens used for dissection were removed after briefly soaking in water, macerated in 10% KOH for 12 hours, washed in water. Following examination, all dissected genitalia were permanently preserved in 75% ethanol solution to maintain tissue integrity.

The terminology used in the description follows (Araya et al., 1995; Huang et al., 2017, 2022; Yokogawa et al., 2018a, 2018b, 2019).

The material examined for this study is deposited in the following institutional and private collections:

ASIZHX - Biodiversity Research Museum, Academia Sinica, Taiwan.

HITOHAU - Museum of Nature and Human Activities, Hyogo, Japan.

JZLC - Jing-Zhi Lin Private Collections of Taipei, Taiwan.

Results

Aesalus (*Huaesalus*) *leei*

(Chinese common name: 北臺斑紋鍬形蟲)

(Fig. 1-4,6)

ZooBank: <https://zoobank.org/DEAB3C5E-9426-4587-B7AB-3DD8C917396B>

Holotype, ♂ (ASIZHX-205091): TAIWAN, Fuxing, Northern Cross-Island Highway, Taoyuan City, 1460 m, 18.I.2025, J.-Z. Lin leg.

Paratypes (11 ex.) All stored in (JZLC).

- 2 ♂, 1 ♀ Same as holotype locality, 1300-1400 m, 04.III.1995, L.-C. Lee leg.

- 2 ♂, 1 ♀ Larvae collected 22.VII.2022, adults emerged II.2023, Wu leg.

- 1 ♂, 1 ♀ Jianshi, Hsinchu County, 1520 m, 15.I.2023, J.-Z. Lin leg.

- 2 ♂, 1 ♀ New Taipei City, 1525-1600 m, 28.I.2023, J.-Z. Lin leg.

Reviewer:

Un spécialiste des Lucanidae, anonyme en raison de la nationalité de l'auteur.



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Description of the holotype (Fig. 1-2)

Dimensions. – Body length: 4.9 mm; width: 2.4 mm.

General coloration. – Dark reddish-brown dorsally and ventrally, densely but shallowly punctate. Integument with pale yellow background bearing regularly arranged clusters of black and yellowish-golden scale-like setae.

Head (Fig. 1). – Width 0.8 mm, length 0.9 mm. Clypeal protuberance prominent in dorsal view. Eyes lacking canthus. Anterior margin of head obtuse; width approximately 0.5× pronotal width. Preocular portion nearly equal in length to eye diameter; interocular distance approximately 9× eye width. Left mandible with two dorsal medial teeth; right mandible with single dorsal tooth, lacking ventral step; mola obsolete in both mandibles; medial margin with setose prosthema. The mentum is hexagonal, medially impressed (or depressed), distinctly punctate, and bears short, yellowish-gray setae. Its width is 2.4 times its length. Labrum setose, movable, approximately 0.2× head width. Antenna (Fig. 1) partially geniculate, 9-segmented; scape elongate, lacking longitudinal groove; club distinctly 3-segmented, entirely pubescent. Antennomere 3 subquadrate; antennomeres 4-6 gradually forming compact part.

Thorax (Fig. 2B). – Pronotum width/length ratio 0.57, widest behind the middle; dorsal surface medially elevated with tufts of dark scales and pair of large black scale-like setal tufts medially; punctation dense but shallow. Scutellum triangular, slightly longer than wide. Prosternum ginkgo-leaf shaped, lacking posterior step-like projection, extending to mesosternum; lateral margins rounded; median portion slender, convex; punctures isodiametric, each bearing short yellowish-gray seta. Metasternum with large circular median depression; punctation fine, isodiametric. Metaepisternum with shallow middle leg reception groove. Mesocoxae separated.

Elytra. – Length 3.7 mm (1.5× combined width). Ground color dark reddish-brown; surface densely but shallowly punctate. Dorsal surface bright yellow, lacking striae, with regular clusters of black and yellowish-golden scale-like setae. Ventral surface with scale-like to rod-shaped setae. Lateral profile strongly and uniformly convex.

Abdomen (Fig. 2A). – Length 0.8× width. All five visible sternites covered with isodiametric to elongate foveae bearing minute setae. Ninth ventrite slender, elongate (Fig. 3A); basal lobe obsolete; pleurites slender, protruding ventrally.

Legs. – Protibia relatively slender, distinctly widened distally; outer margin dentate with a large, curved, hook-like apical spine (approximately 0.3× protibial apical width). Meso- and metatibiae with fine punctures bearing obliquely erect pilosity; outer margins with small denticles; distal outer margin with large denticle; distal inner margin with sharp spurs. All tarsi short, combined length approximately half of corresponding tibia length.

Genitalia (Fig. 2C, D, E). – Median lobe in lateral view strongly curved, widest medially, symmetrical, spatulate distally; internal sac visible; paired struts absent. Basal piece very short, fused to paramera and penis. Paramera slender, 0.75× median lobe length, closely appressed to penis.

Paratypes (n=11). – Length: 4.5-6.2 mm; width: 2.3-3.1 mm. Variation observed in: 1) body size; 2) density and distribution of elytral setal tufts; 3) intensity of reddish-brown coloration.

Sexual dimorphism. – No marked external dimorphism, except for significantly longer apical spines on pro- and mesotibiae in males; distal outer margin of metatibia in female robustly protruding.

Female genitalia (Fig. 4B). – Stylus large, strongly curved outwards. Hemisternite weakly sclerotized; outer lateral margin slightly concave; distal margin with long setae.

Diagnosis. – *Aesalus leei* **sp. nov.** resembles *A. imanishii* in general morphology but differs by the following characters:

- 1 - Elytral scale-like bristles arranged in more regular and prominent patterns;
- 2 - Clypeal apex slightly pointed (rounded in *A. imanishii*);
- 3 - The aedeagal constriction, located just behind the distal end, is more distinct. (This structure is expanded in the related species *A. imanishii*);
- 4 - The female ultimate ventrite is comparatively narrower, and the apex of the median process is attenuate (this structure is distinctly broader in *A. imanishii*).
- 5 - Female genital stylus more robust.

Comparative material examined

Aesalus sichuanensis Araya, Tanaka & Tanikado, 1995
(Fig. 5A, B)

Type material examined: **holotype:** ♂, (HITOHAKU) CHINA: Chongqing Municipality, Chengkou County, northern slope of Daba Mountains (1800-1900 m), 21.IV.1994.

Aesalus imanishii Inahara & Ratti, 1981
(Fig. 5C)

Type material examined

Holotype: ♂, (HITOHAKU) TAIWAN: Nantou County, Meifeng (2100 m), 22-23.III.1974, O. Imanishi leg.

Additional material examined**Topotype, TAIWAN**

- 5 ♂, 3 ♀, Nantou, Meifeng (2100 m), 4.IV.1992, J.-C. Lo leg. (JZLC);
- 8 ♂, 11 ♀, Nantou, Songgang-Meifeng (1918-2130 m), 10.I.2023, J.-Z. Lin leg. (JZLC);
- 2 ♂, 1 ♀, Taichung City, Heping District (2013 m), 15.II.2023, local collector (JZLC);
- 2 ♂, Miaoli County, Nanzhuang Township (1923 m), 11.VIII.2017, local collector (JZLC).

Checklist of *Aesalus* species in East Asia**- *Aesalus (Aesalus) asiaticus asiaticus* Lewis, 1883**

Distribution: Japan (Hokkaido, Okushiri Island, Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu, Tsushima, Sado Island, Oki Islands, Amakusa Islands [Shimajima], Osumi Islands [Tanegashima], Izu Islands [Oshima, Toshima, Mikurajima]) (Lewis, 1883; Mizunuma & Nagai, 1994; Fujita, 2010).

- *Aesalus (Aesalus) asiaticus sawaii* Fujita & Ichikawa, 1985

Distribution: Japan (Yakushima) (Fujita & Ichikawa, 1985; Mizunuma & Nagai, 1994; Fujita, 2010).

- *Aesalus (Huaesalus) imanishii* Inahara & Ratti, 1981

Distribution: Taiwan (central: Yunlin, Chiayi, Taichung, Miaoli, Nantou) (Inahara & Ratti, 1981; Mizunuma & Nagai, 1994; Chang, 1993, 2006; Fujita, 2010; Huang & Chen, 2017).

- *Aesalus (Huaesalus) leei* Lin **sp. nov.**

Distribution: Taiwan (northern: Hsinchu, New Taipei City, Taoyuan, Yilan).

- *Aesalus (Huaesalus) qiaoweipengi* Huang, Yang & Chen, 2022

Distribution: China (Henan: Baotianman Nature Reserve) (Huang *et al.*, 2022).

- *Aesalus (Huaesalus) sichuanensis* Araya, Tanaka & Tanikado, 1995

Distribution: China (Chongqing: Dabashan, Guangtoushan) [Note: original Sichuan record erroneous] (Araya *et al.*, 1995; Fujita, 2010; Huang & Chen, 2017).

The new species shows similarities with *A. sichuanensis* in female genital morphology but can be distinguished by

- 1 - Clypeal margin relatively rounded (sharper in *A. sichuanensis*);
- 2 - Relatively narrow stylus.

When compared to *A. qiaoweipengi*, it differs in the following characters:

- 1 - The prosternal process is distinctly broader;
- 2 - The female genital stylus is more elongate;
- 3 - The aedeagal constriction behind the distal end is broader. (See Huang *et al.*, 2022: figs 6, 7, 12).

Note. – Dissection reveals minor discrepancies between the diagnostic characteristics of *A. imanishii* observed in this study and those illustrated in Huang and Chen (2017: 481-482). I consider these differences to represent intraspecific variation, as they do not preclude a clear diagnosis from the new species.

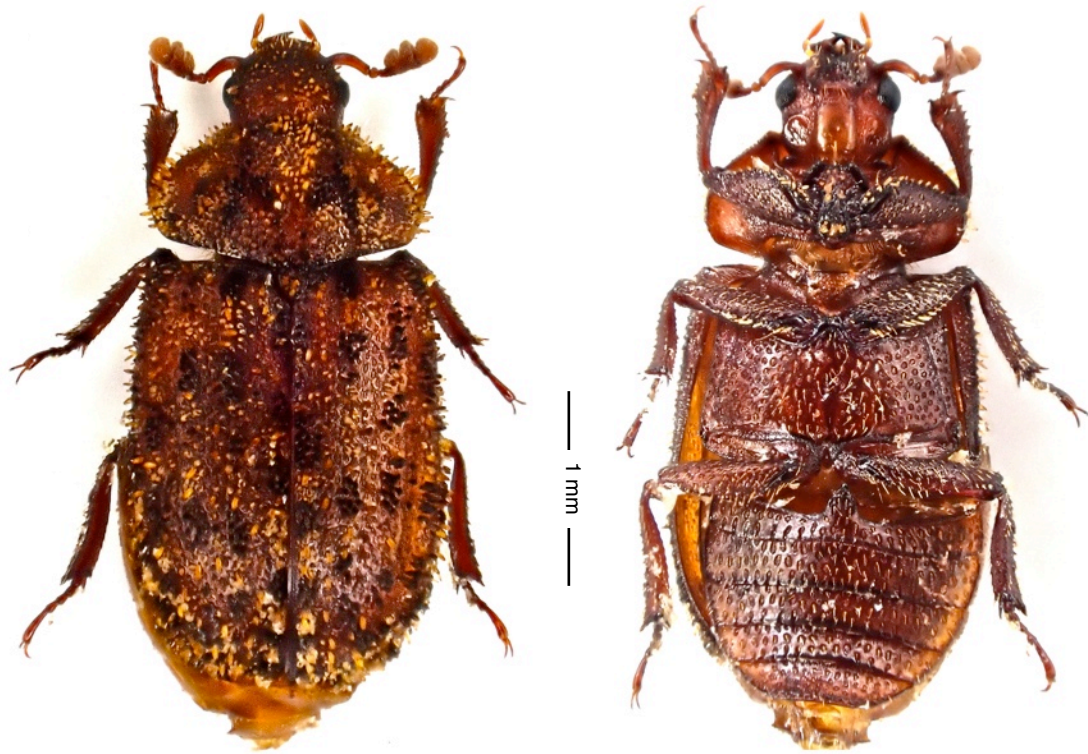


Fig. 1. *Aesalus leei* sp. nov., holotype, dorsal and ventral view.



Fig. 2. *Aesalus leei* sp. nov., holotype.

A. Abdomen, ventral view. B. Thorax, ventral view. C-E. Aedeagus. C. Dorsal view. D. Ventral view. E. Lateral view.

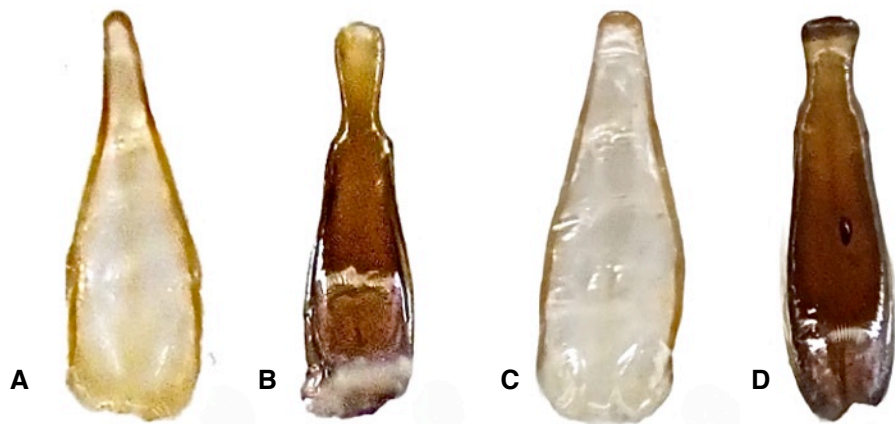


Fig. 3. A-B. *Aesalus leei* sp. nov., paratype. A. Abdominal segment IX. B. Genitalia. C-D. *Aesalus imanishii*. C. Abdominal segment IX (topotype). D. Genitalia.

Etymology. – This new species is named after Mr. Liang-Chuan Lee, discoverer of the species.

Distribution. – The species is currently known only from northern Taiwan (New Taipei City, Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Ilan), occurring at elevations of 1,300–1,700 m.

Field observations. – Adults and larvae of *Aesalus leei* **sp. nov.** were primarily collected from decaying trunks and stumps of *Pasania* sp. (Fagaceae) and *Prunus* sp. (Rosaceae), particularly in wood sections exhibiting reddish-brown decomposition (Fig. 6A), with additional specimens found in decomposing logs of unidentified plants within a highly humid *Machilus-Castanopsis* forest (Fig. 6B). Mating behavior was observed on the surface of rotting wood during daylight hours in spring (Fig. 6C), while both larvae and adults were documented overwintering within decayed logs (Fig. 6D). The species co-occurs with several other lucanid beetles in the same microhabitat, including *Dorcus miwai* Benesh, 1936, *Dorcus gracilicornis* Benesh, 1950, and *Pseudorhaetia sinicus concolor* Benesh, 1960.

Discussion

The co-occurrence of two *Aesalus* species on Taiwan Island is likely a consequence of the region's complex topography and environmental heterogeneity. Continuous mountain uplift (orogenesis) has long been recognized as a significant driver of population differentiation and speciation across various Taiwanese taxa (Teng, 1990; Huang et al., 1997; Chou et al., 2021), including within the family Lucanidae. Both the resulting

allopatric divergence and the pronounced environmental gradients along elevation zones may have collectively promoted the taxonomic isolation and potential ecological speciation observed. These combined processes provide a robust explanation for the divergence between *Aesalus leei* **sp. nov.** and *A. imanishii*.

Aesalus leei **sp. nov.** is strictly confined to the Xueshan Range, a well-documented biodiversity hotspot (Cheng et al., 2005; Chou et al., 2011), while *A. imanishii* is restricted to the Central Mountain Range. Crucially, these species demonstrate clear altitudinal segregation with no observed overlap: *A. leei* occurs between 1,300 and 1,700 m, whereas *A. imanishii* is found at higher elevations from 1,800 to 2,500 m. This spatial separation strongly suggests niche differentiation, likely mediated by microclimatic or vegetational factors, reinforcing the role of environmental heterogeneity in their speciation.

This discovery reinforces the observation by Huang et al. (2022) that the unexpected emergence of new species indicates the biodiversity of the Aesalini tribe is richer than previously thought. This finding further confirms that the *Aesalus* diversity of Taiwan and the Chinese mainland remains incompletely documented, underscoring the necessity for continued systematic surveys. Future research incorporating molecular phylogenetic approaches is warranted, not only to definitively determine if the divergence between these species resulted from in-situ ecological speciation or allopatric differentiation followed by secondary contact, but also to further verify if the subgenus (*Huaesalus*) should be elevated to an independent generic rank.

Key to species of *Aesalus* in East Asia

1. Antenna 10-segmented; antennal club partly tomentose (not fully pubescent); sexual dimorphism in mandibles distinct; body robust; aedeagus median lobe uniformly wide throughout its length **2**
 - Antenna 9-segmented; antennal club completely pubescent; sexual dimorphism in mandibles indistinct; body dorsoventrally flattened; aedeagus median lobe attains its maximum width at the middle, with conspicuous narrowing subapically and toward the base **3**
2. Pronotum with clustered black scale-like bristles medially; elytral punctures small and confluent. (Main Japanese islands) *A. asiaticus asiaticus* Lewis, 1883
 - Pronotum lacking clustered scale-like bristles; elytral punctures distinct and sparser. (Yakushima Island, Japan) *A. asiaticus sawaii* Fujita & Ichikawa, 1985
3. Clypeal apex medially pointed; body length 6.0–7.5 mm; color gray-brown; elytral scale clusters irregular; prosternal intercoxal process broad throughout; male genitalia with strongly expanded distal end; female genitalia with large, outwardly curved stylus; female last ventrite with triangular process. (Chongqing, China) *Aesalus sichuanensis* Araya, Tanaka & Tanikado, 1995
 - Clypeal apex rounded or slightly acute; elytral scale clusters regular **4**
4. Clypeal apex rounded; body length 5.0–6.5 mm; color dark brown; elytral scales sparse; prosternal intercoxal process parallel-sided; female last ventrite with broad central process. (Henan, China) *Aesalus qiaoweipengi* Huang, Yang & Chen, 2022
 - From Taiwan; elytral scale clusters more regular and distinct **5**
5. Body length 4.5–5.5 mm; color reddish-brown; prosternal intercoxal process medially constricted; male genitalia not expanded distally; female genitalia with slender, elongate stylus; female last ventrite with rod-like process. (Central Taiwan) *Aesalus imanishii* Inahara & Ratti, 1981
 - Elytral scale-like bristles arranged in more regular and prominent patterns; Clypeal apex slightly acute; body slenderer; prosternal intercoxal process not constricted; metasternum narrowed; male genitalia with abruptly narrowed distal end; female genitalia with strongly hooked short spike. (Northern Taiwan) *Aesalus leei* **sp. nov.**

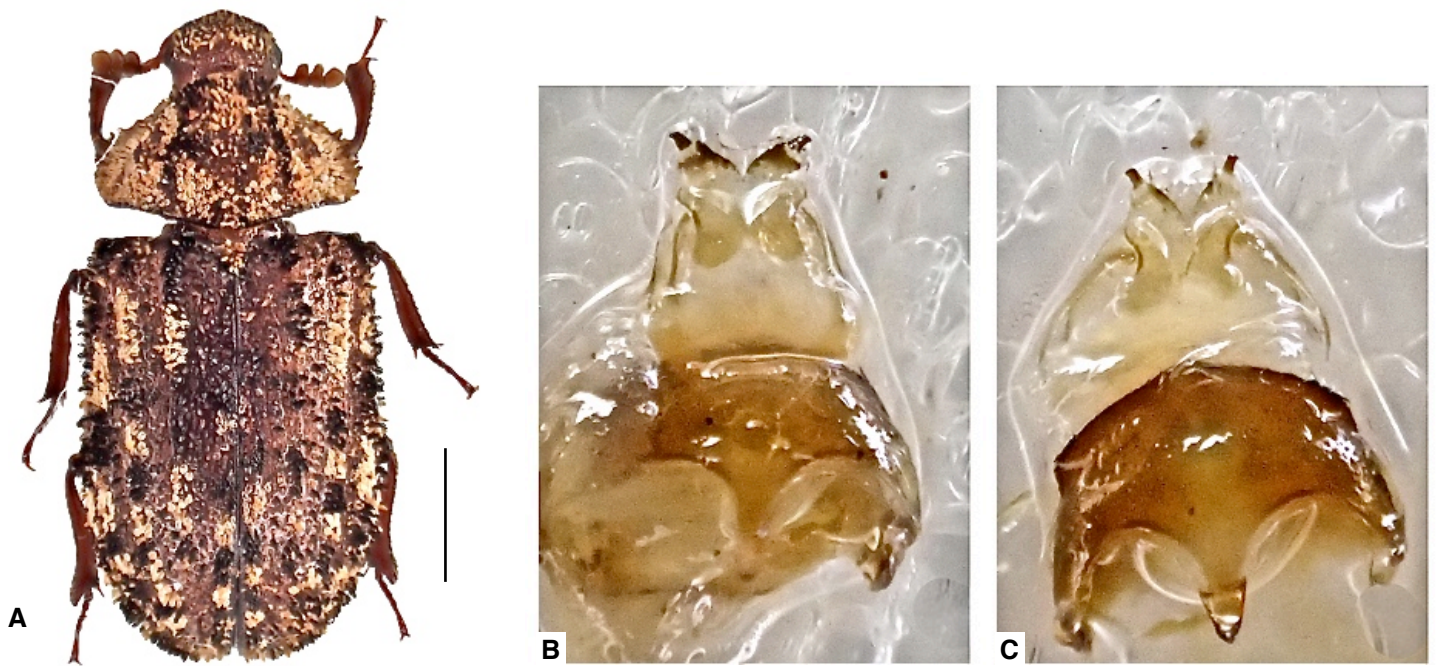


Fig. 4. A. *Aesalus leei* sp. nov., paratype, female habits in dorsal view. B. *Aesalus leei* sp. nov., paratype, female sclerites. C. *Aesalus imanishii*, topotype, female sclerites.

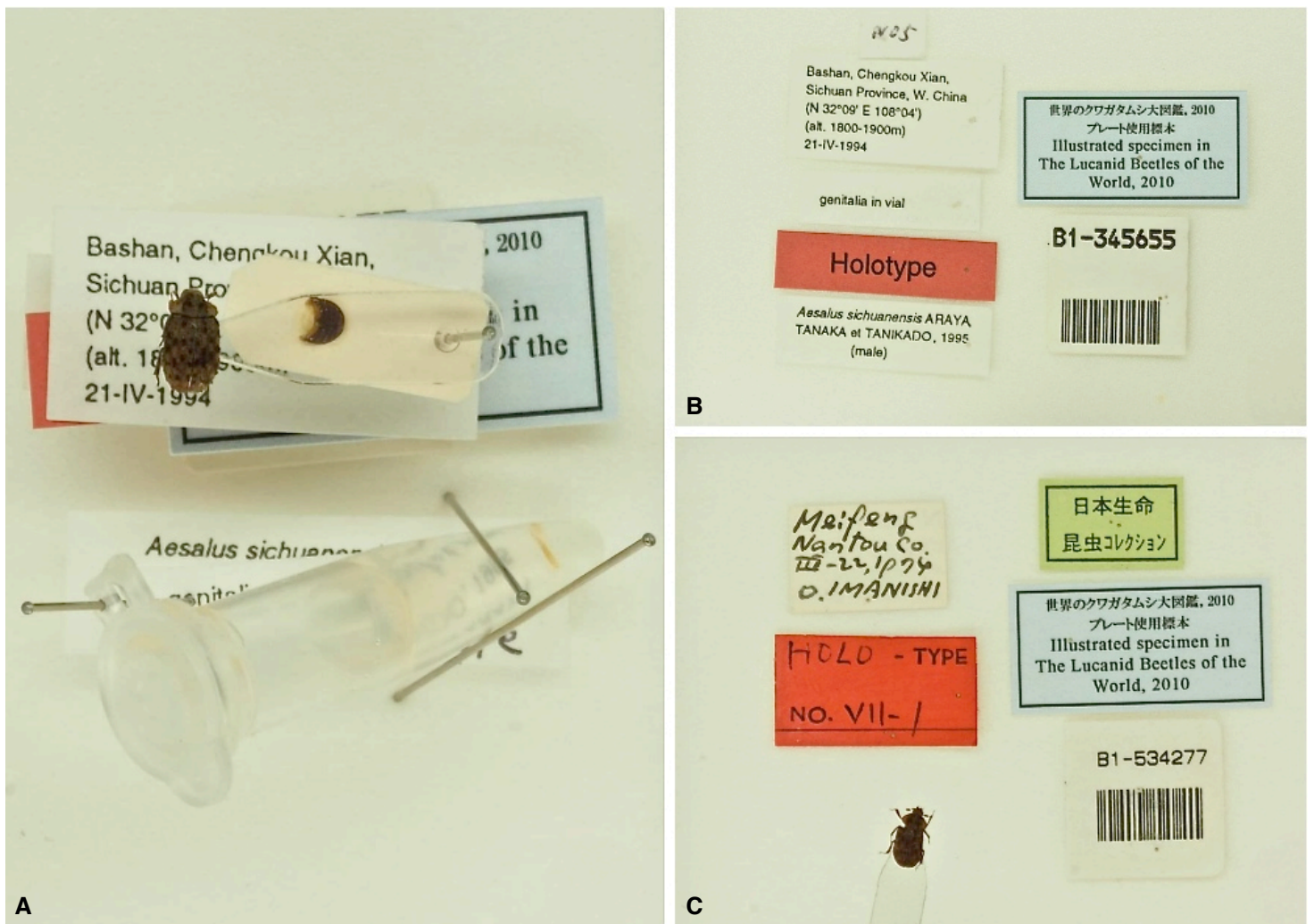


Fig. 5. A-B. *Aesalus sichuanensis* Araya, Tanaka & Tanikado, 1995. A. Holotype. B. Holotype labels. C. *Aesalus imanishii* Inahara & Ratti, 1981, holotype.



Fig. 6. Biotope and field observation of *Aesalus leei* sp. nov.

A. Decaying wood from which the new species was collected, showing red staining. **B.** Example of forest habitat hosting *Aesalus leei*. **C.** Adult specimens photographed on the wood surface during mating season. **D.** *Aesalus leei* larva found in the brown, rotten part of the wood.

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Résumé

Lin J.-Z., 2025. – Contribution à la connaissance du genre *Aesalus* Fabricius, 1801 (Coleoptera : Lucanidae), avec la description d'une nouvelle espèce du nord de Taïwan. *Faunitaxys*, 13(54): 1 – 7.

Aesalus (Huaesalus) leei sp. nov., une nouvelle espèce du groupe *A. imanishii* (Coleoptera : Lucanidae), est décrite du nord de Taïwan. Elle se caractérise par des antennes à neuf articles, une morphologie externe distinctive et des caractères génitaux uniques. Une clé d'identification et une liste mises à jour des *Aesalus* d'Asie du Sud-Est sont également fournies.

Mots-clés. – Coleoptera, Lucanidae, Aesalinae, Aesalini, *Huaesalus*, taxonomie, description, nouvelle espèce, Taïwan.

Derniers articles publiés

- Chakrovorty A., Háva J. & Bhattacharjee B., 2025. – *Litargus (Litargosomus) arjanbasui* sp. nov.: A new species of hairy fungus beetle (Coleoptera: Tenebrionidae: Mycetophagidae) from West Bengal, India. *Faunitaxys*, 13(46): 1 – 10. [https://doi.org/10.57800/faunitaxys-13\(46\)](https://doi.org/10.57800/faunitaxys-13(46))
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- Qi Z.-H., Bian C.-Z., Xin F.-Y., Dang V. N., Song H.-T. & Liang G.-H., 2025. – A new subspecies of *Dorcus linwenhsini* Huang & Chen, 2013 from Northern Vietnam (Coleoptera: Lucanidae: Lucaninae). *Faunitaxys*, 13(52): 1 – 10. [https://doi.org/10.57800/faunitaxys-13\(52\)](https://doi.org/10.57800/faunitaxys-13(52))
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Illustration de la couverture :

In northern Taiwan's Lashan, towering ancient cypresses stand as natural monuments, revered by locals as "Divine Trees." The name "Lala" originates from the Atayal indigenous word "R'ra," meaning "beautiful," "awe-inspiring," or "watchtower" - reflecting how the Atayal people once used this area for hunting grounds and territorial defense. These ancient names bear witness to the region's abundant cypress forests and breathtaking natural heritage.

Crédits:

Jing-Zhi Lin: Fig. 1-4, 6 & couverture.

Tadashi Yokogawa: Fig. 5.